

Contra Costa County
Public Works Department
Creek Maintenance Program Information

Directions and Guidelines for Creek Maintenance

Creek maintenance is the responsibility of the owner whose property abuts a creek (usually to the centerline of a creek). When the creek area is not properly maintained, the resulting obstructions can lead to increased flooding, changes in the course of the creek, and increased erosion on the obstructed property or downstream. It is imperative that the work be conducted in such a manner that will not affect the natural habitat of fish and game that share the creek with us and in a way that will preserve the beauty of our creeks.

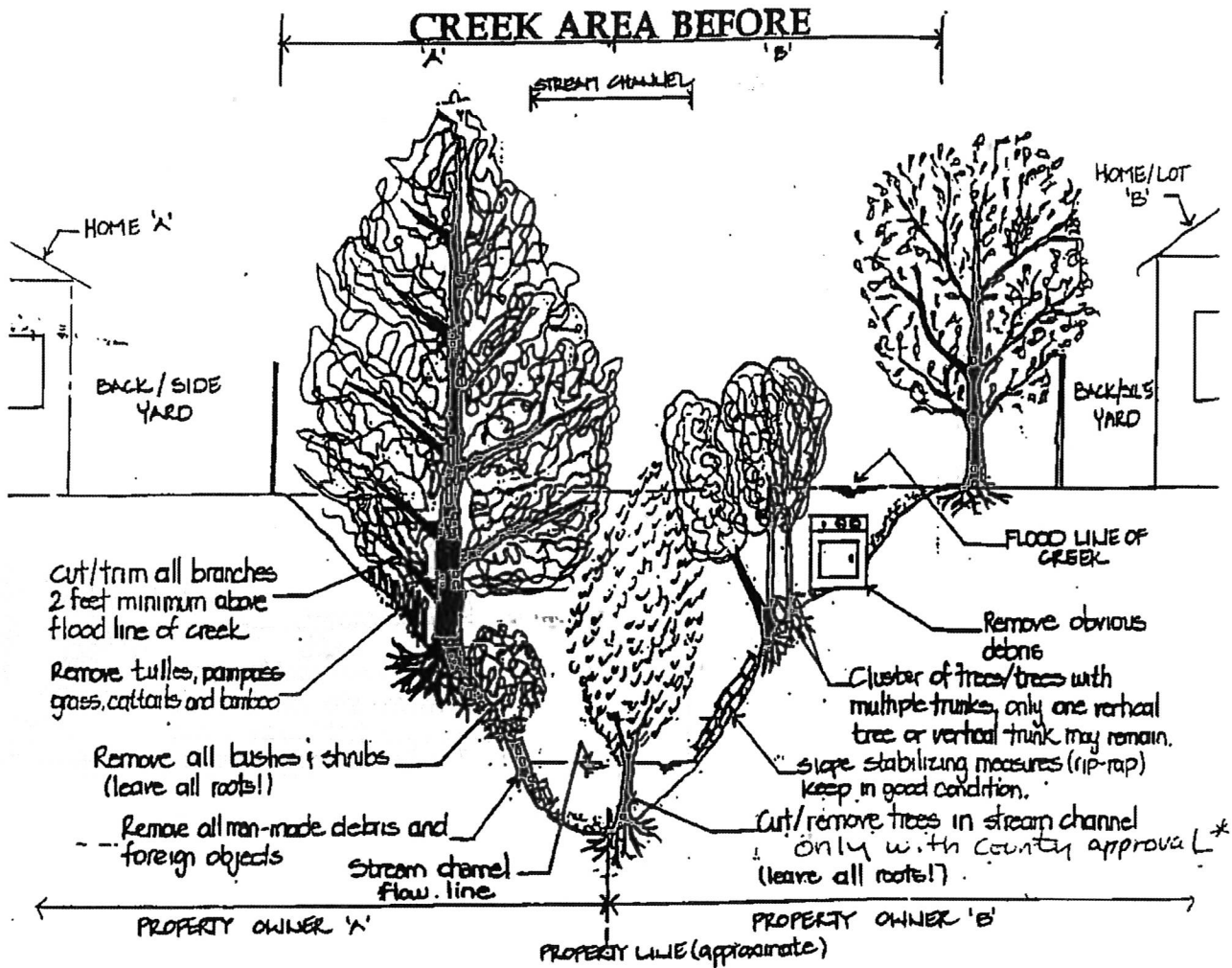
The Public Works Department recommends the following guidelines be followed when maintaining the creek on your property.

1. **Remove all debris and foreign objects.** These may include anything from bottles and cans, broken concrete, fallen fences, shopping carts, appliances or any man-made object. It also includes wood and fallen trees or tree limbs. This is the property owner's responsibility even if the object washed down from upstream. It is recommended that all stored material in your backyard be placed a minimum of 10 feet away from the top of bank to avoid material from washing away into the creek during heavy storms. Sheds and minor structures should be anchored to ground if closer than 10 feet.
2. **Remove vegetation except low ground cover from the creek banks up to the top of the bank (flood line)** including shrubs, tulle, pampas grass, cattails, and bamboo. Leave all root systems in place. Remove hanging vines that may create an obstruction to the natural flow of water in the creek. If you have berry vines, trim these back to the bank.
3. **Remove from the creek banks up to the top of the bank (flood line) any tree limbs which hang within two feet of the top of the bank.** Any single tree of 2-inch diameter or greater which is living and not leaning toward the creek may remain. If there are trees growing in clusters, trees with multiple trunks, or trees within the stream channel that may cause an obstruction to the flow of water, **"Do Not Remove"** until you contact the California Department of Fish and Game for direction.
4. **Do not clear-cut** the creek slopes. Leave ground cover such as low grasses or vines. If you are directed to cut a tree, cut it at the ground level, but leave roots in the ground.
5. If you have existing **slope stabilization measures** such as rip-rap (rock, concrete), a retaining wall, or jute covering, **keep these measures in good condition.** If these measures require any repair or if you want to install a measure to stabilize your slope, you must first contact the County to get a drainage/grading permit. A permit from the Department of Fish and Game and the Regional Water Quality Control Board may be required. If any work is done to alter the creek including widening, filling, dredging/altering the natural creek flow, an Army Corps of Engineers Permit will be required.

The diagrams on the back of these directions illustrate the above guidelines. If you have questions, you may call the Contra Costa County, Public Works Department Assistant Field Operations Manager, Tony Medina, at (925) 313-7046. For Permit information, contact the California Department of Fish and Game at (707) 944-5520, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board at (510) 622-2300, or the Army Corps of Engineers at (415) 977-8464.

Public Nuisance. Allowing or maintaining obstructions in a creek is a public nuisance under both local and state law. Both the California Civil Code (section 3479) and the California Penal Codes (section 370) declare that anything which unlawfully obstructs the free passage of any river, stream or canal is a public nuisance. Contra Costa County Title 10 Chapter 1010-2 also provides that such conditions constitute a public nuisance. A public nuisance pertains to any person owning, leasing, occupying, or having charge or possession of any real property which . . . causes or will cause erosion, subsidence, or surface water runoff problems which can or may be injurious to the public health, safety and welfare or to adjacent properties.

CREEK AREA BEFORE



CREEK AREA AFTER

